

Thank you for this opportunity to address this to my colleague, and, Mr. Speaker, it is about prosperity for the American Dream. It is about protecting the American taxpayers' dollars and about making sure that we are working together for progress in our society.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina.

In the remaining four or five minutes we have, I want to turn this over to one of the founders, one of the long-time leaders of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, and that is my friend from Iowa, Mr. LEONARD BOSWELL.

Mr. BOSWELL. Thank you, MIKE. I appreciate my friend from Arkansas giving me this opportunity. And I want to compliment you for the untiring hours you've spent in trying to tell this Nation, this Congress, and all who will listen that it is time to be fiscally responsible. It has been for some time.

And I would like to associate myself with my friend from North Carolina in the comments he just made. Very, very germane to what is going on in our country today. In fact, around the world. And as you can tell, Mr. ROSS, I am one of the older folks around here. I don't know if that's something I should be proud of. I guess I'm proud versus the alternative. But oftentimes people say to me, You're going to be all right. Why are you worried about it so much?

Well, I am worried about it. Yes, at my age I suppose I'm going to be all right. But you know what? I have children and I have grandchildren and I am very proud of them, and I want them to have the opportunities.

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In fact, just like you and you and you and anybody else that's paying attention, we all want it better for our children, that's just inherent. And they're not going to have that opportunity if we don't do something about this. And that's what you display right there on that chart.

That figure of \$9 trillion-plus is staggering, and it's growing; it has been for the last number of years. And we went from the opportunity of being in a surplus to this unbelievable deficit situation. And it really ties our hands as to what we can do as we think about our leadership in the world we know today.

This very day I'm quite sure that we've had people from our Treasury Department over in China trying to borrow money so we can continue to run on deficit, and this just won't work. You can't do your business in Arkansas, you can't do it in North Carolina, I can't do it in Iowa, nobody can.

There comes a time when you have to face reality. And Mr. Stenholm used to tell us from time to time that if you realize you're in trouble and going into a hole, the first thing you do is quit digging. And there is something to that. Well, we need to do it, and we need to do it badly.

So, I am pleased to associate with the Blue Dog Coalition, I have been for some time, and the leadership that Mr. ROSS and others, Mr. BOYD and others, have given to trying to make this point come to life in the sense that we've got to do it for our country and for our kids and our grandkids. This is something we must do, and there is just no choice about it.

I think there is a lot of hope for us in the world that we're living in today. I have a lot of hope, and I want to keep it that way. At the same time, I'm fully aware from my travels and from my life experience that the world is in a perilous situation. And we won't always be in this leadership position if we don't take a hold and get our arms around this situation. But we've got to do it.

And as we well know, the time is now at hand, I think it's already here, that China is a superpower. They are certainly going to be if they're not; I think they probably are. India, the demands they're putting on us. The big trade deficits we've got, we can't sustain those. And you put all this in line with this tremendous debt we have and what we're paying for interest annually, it equates to something like \$250 billion a year. It equates to one of our major line items for our department. We can't afford to do that, and we have to face reality.

So, I really appreciate the efforts being made by you, Mike, and all of us to try to do something about this, and the fact that the leadership of this Congress has accepted our idea of PAYGO. And it's something we have decided upon and we've got to stick to it. There are going to be a lot of temptations to vary from that. And as we went into the farm bill, for example, it was so hard to do it, but we stuck with it, we worked hard and we came up with a viable solution. We've got to do it in all the things that lay before us. We've got to set the priorities and get those things done.

I see the time is about up. So I yield back to you, Mr. ROSS, for the closing comment, if you would like. I just want to say I appreciate coming here this evening and sharing some of my concerns for this situation at hand. We have to take it as a real situation. It's here. And if we don't do our job, we're going to leave it on our children and our grandchildren, and we don't want to do that.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Iowa.

The gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. BOSWELL. Just the last word I'll say is we always want to remember it's the taxpayers' money. It's not Washington's money, it's not the government's money, it's the taxpayers' money, and we want to do everything we can to make sure that everything is honored. That's the Blue Dogs' battle cry, and that's where we stand. And I thank you for this opportunity to share in this.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, this evening you've heard from Blue Dog members

from Kansas, Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, Iowa and Arkansas. And we're a group of 47 fiscally conservative Democrats that are simply trying to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's Government as we try to offer up commonsense, practical ways to put an end to this reckless spending and hold this government accountable for how your tax money is being spent.

HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

And having been a speaker in waiting, I had the privilege to listen to some of the Blue Dogs talk about their budgetary priorities. And I also listened to the reflection of the individual from Iowa, whose cows I represent down there in my territory. And we are good neighbors and we've worked together over the last 5 years that I have been in this Congress.

There always are two sides to an issue, and a number of the statements that were made here I absolutely agree with. I would submit, though, that there is a distinction between us, and that is, I want a balanced budget. I worked for a balanced budget. I called for a balanced budget upon my arrival in this Congress 5 years ago. I've sought to produce those numbers and get that language out on the floor.

My Blue Dog friends also call for a balanced budget, but they're willing to raise the taxes. And they have offered several budgets to this Congress that would have raised taxes in order to balance this budget.

I would submit that we need to balance the budget a different way. We need to do it by controlling spending. And we can do a better job of controlling discretionary spending, but in there is not the answer, not the complete answer to the things that we need to do.

The tax cuts that came from the Bush administration immediately following September 11, 2001, and the next wave of tax cuts that we did in 2003 have stimulated this economy, and they have probably kept us from a recession and maybe even a depression. So, Mr. Speaker, I would submit this: I would take your reflection back to that period of time that was in the end of the Clinton administration, during the campaign of the Bush-Gore campaign in the year 1999 and 2000 and the beginning of the Bush administration. We had this growing, booming economy, and it coupled with serious spending cuts that were brought forth on the floor of this Congress by Republican leadership, the new Republican leadership that arrived here, elected in 1994, sworn in here in the first week of January of 1995, and came in and said, we're

going to do these 10 things, and we're going to work towards a balanced budget. And they actually didn't know that they could accomplish that. But as they brought the spending restraint and the cuts and the efforts to eliminate entire departments, unsuccessful, I might add, Mr. Speaker, that constrained this growth in spending. And by the way, they didn't have any inhibitions about cutting down and limiting the spending that President Clinton wanted to do at the time. They had political opposition, so points were being scored on both sides. And while that was going on, we were holding this budget down. In fact, the government went into shutdown. And there was a time when I thought that the leadership in this Congress should not have blinked. But in the end, regardless of who got the blame, this Congress, had it not had the majority that was here, and I would point out to the Speaker that that was a Republican majority, we would not have had a balanced budget in the 1990s. You would not have seen John Kasich with a T-shirt that said "back in the black" with the line of our spending cut down and where we were going into solvency.

But we got into solvency. And I don't get the credit for that, I wasn't here at the time. This Congress got into solvency because it had solid, conservative leadership. And then, as the administration changed from the Clinton administration, which has been lauded here tonight, I believe, to the Bush administration, at the same time we had a dot-com bubble in our economy, there was a growth on Wall Street that capital was being attracted to the information age, that type of industry. And there was a belief that because technology had taken the microchip to the level where we could store and transfer energy more effectively and more efficiently than ever before, there were billions of dollars speculated in dot-com companies on the idea that, with all this technology, we are transitioning from the industrial age into the information age.

And as we go into the information age, Mr. Speaker, the capital that was attracted to those businesses was capital that simply was placed upon the speculation that, because we could transfer and store information more efficiently than ever before, somehow these companies that were formed for that purpose would be able to all make a profit. But the bubble, when it burst, it was the realization that this information, just because we could store it and transfer it more effectively than ever before, didn't necessarily transfer into profit. It couldn't be translated directly into profit because the information storage and transferability that came with the information age, that actually caused the information age, that ability was predicated upon how that information could provide a good or a service more efficiently, or to the extent that that information could be used for recreational purposes.

Now, we understand the good or the service being provided more efficiently. Look at the things that we can do with tracking inventory, for example, or dispatching trucks on the roads of America with the satellite transponders, to be able to sit there at a software screen, if you're dispatching trucks in a nationwide or continentwide trucking company, and be able to see on that screen a little dot where every truck is, be able to click on that and find out when that truck got its last rest, how much rest the driver had, what the maintenance is on the truck, what the cargo is, what the delivery time is, how many miles are left, and be able to have that software package give you a warning on when a load might be late. And we went from keeping significant inventories in our warehouses in America to just-in-time delivery, partly because we could do a more effective job of dispatching trucks.

That's just one of the things that came with the information age, and that's efficiencies that came into this because of being able to store and transfer and calculate more efficiently than ever before. But, a miscalculation that was made by Wall Street was a miscalculation that, because we could store and transfer and calculate more effectively, that it all translated into profit. It did not.

And so the speculators on Wall Street and into the private companies, whether they were publicly traded or whether they were privately traded companies, the speculation part of that was the dot-com bubble. And it burst. And it burst kind of slowly, not like a balloon pop, but kind of a slow letting out of the air. And as that bubble collapsed, that transitioned across the end of the Clinton administration into the beginnings of the Bush administration. And while that was going on, we had corruption that emerged within major companies, within major corporations within the United States. And we know who some of them are, Enron, for example.

And so, as this corruption was corrected and as we saw legislation being passed in this Congress and signed by the President, there was also downward pressure on our stock market because they didn't know how much regulation they were going to get from this Congress, under the pen of the President, what was going to happen. So, how would this Congress react?

Well, as that debate went on, as we began to clean up the corruption that emerged, and thankfully that did happen to a large degree, that went on top of the slow letting out of the air, I call it the bursting of the dot-com bubble, those two pressures downward came downward on our economy. Well, we know that our tax collections are also predicated upon how strong our economy is. And if we have growth, we will have more taxes; if we have a decline, we will have fewer taxes. With the dot-com bubble bursting and the corruption that was being ad-

ressed, both suppressed our economy and the tax revenues declined.

While this was going on and as the President was getting his feel of coming into the Oval Office and beginning to become the newly sworn President of the United States, January until September, in September of that same year that the President was sworn in, while he is dealing with the bursting of the dot-com bubble and the corporation corruption, and while this Congress is as well, we had the September 11 attack on the Twin Towers, on the Pentagon, and a plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. That was a direct attack on our national defense center and a direct attack on our financial centers.

And so, Mr. Speaker, all of these things came descending down upon this Nation, focused like a laser beam on the responsibilities of the President of the United States. And the President responded by calling for tax cuts in a wave that came pretty closely after the September 11th attacks. While we were ramping up our defense, while we were ramping up homeland security, while we were setting up the TSA, and today we walk through the airports and there are billions that have been spent for the security just to board airplanes, and you add that to the cost of the expansion of our military, the cost that came because we went, appropriately, into Afghanistan and then in the following year and a half we went then on into Iraq, all of these things were pressures on this economy. And all of them worked against a balanced budget that, the last number I saw it looked like we were going to come in about \$158 billion in the red, \$158 billion, and one could speculate as to whether that is a hard number, whether it might go up or whether it might go down as a percentage of our overall budget, tells me if we would have had hard-nosed fiscal discipline even on the discretionary spending just in the time that I have been here in 5 years, we would have reached a balanced budget. We would have gotten there just by having spending discipline, not the discipline that says I want to increase spending because I think I see these needs, and if I'm going to do that, then I want to increase taxes. That's the approach that comes, and, admittedly, the Blue Dogs have more discipline than a lot of the folks on their side of the aisle, but they don't have as much spending discipline as I have. I would pull this thing right on down and I would set it out and say, we can get to a balanced budget by having discipline and discretionary spending.

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But, Mr. Speaker, that is not really the answer either. That is a constant fight, and it is a diminishing effort to slow down and eventually reduce discretionary spending to balance the budget because the more we do that, it is working in the right direction because it slows growth in government and it holds more personal responsibility and so less spending creates less

dependency. Those are all good things, Mr. Speaker.

But the other side of this is that while we are talking about discretionary spending, the huge elephants in the room, one might speak, or should I say the gorilla in the room, I hesitate to say the donkey in the room, but those huge gorillas in the room are this: Medicare; Social Security; to a lesser extent Medicaid; the entitlements; and then, of course, the growing interest, which we heard about from the Blue Dogs, the growing cost of maintaining the interest. But Medicare and Social Security are the two big ones.

As the President stepped out from his second inaugural address that took place in January right out here in the west portico of the Capitol Building in January 2005 and talked about the position we were in as a Nation and we were poised to hopefully end the war in Iraq and move forward with our economy; the two rounds of tax cuts that we had done had succeeded in rebounding this economy and got us back into a growth mode again, and today we are sitting on 49 consecutive months of growth. Astonishing.

There are astonishing measures of the economic growth in this country. But the President stepped out from that west portico and invested his political capital in addressing the Social Security entitlement, a huge burden that is coming at us. As I listen to the Blue Dogs talk about Social Security, I didn't hear them talk about, this is a bit of an old number, but a number that I recall from a couple of years ago and is at least representative and it will not be precisely accurate today but slightly dated, \$1.7 trillion in the Social Security trust fund. That was there a couple of years ago. That trust fund continues to grow today because we are collecting more Social Security than it takes to pay the benefits out to the people that are the recipients of that Social Security.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't submit that where we are with this is a good idea. I point that out that there is an account there that presumably we could draw from that is going to address this big entitlement. But it works out like this. Even if that money were going into a lock box, as some said it was, even if that were an account that grew interest at \$1.7 trillion and add some more in there over the last couple of years to get that number up, it is probably approaching \$2 trillion or more by now, the accumulation in that account goes, it accumulates until about the year 2016. And then it goes the other way. Then we start spending more than we are taking in. And from that year forward, that roughly \$2 trillion that will be in there will be spent down by the year, and these numbers aren't the freshest again, but in the neighborhood of 2042, by then the Social Security trust fund is broke. Then what do we do?

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that, first of all, it wasn't a good idea to put

the Social Security money into a trust fund if we were going to spend the money from the trust fund and put it into the general fund. If we were going to borrow the money from the Social Security trust fund and spend it with our overall budget, which we have been doing, that breaks faith with idea that there is a trust fund, because in the end it is an accounting gimmick.

I have in my file somewhere, an electronic file of one of the bonds that are on file. This Social Security trust fund that is approaching \$2 trillion is the accounting of it is, yes, electronically but also it is an accounting that is paperwork, actual bonds that are printed on paper that is identical to this paper worth no more than probably not as much as a blank sheet of paper from a copy machine, 8½ by 11. They print these off. I have one that is a sample. I believe it is \$3.54 billion on that little sheet of paper that says trust fund account bond for the Social Security trust fund. Those original documents, Mr. Speaker, are on file in a filing cabinet in Parkersburg, West Virginia, ROBERT BYRD's district, and they are there because some enterprising Senator passed legislation that said, you will keep a paper accounting of the Social Security trust fund.

Well, the paper is an accounting. The electronics is an accounting. But the accountability of our Social Security trust fund is the full faith and credit of the people of the United States as represented through the United States Congress, and when the day comes that we need to tap into that Social Security trust fund, which will be a day in about the year 2016 when we start tapping into that, there isn't any money there. It is only there on IOUs from the government to the government, which is the equivalent of writing yourself an IOU and putting it in your pocket. The value is only the value that it reminds us that we have this obligation to keep our sacred trust with the senior citizens of America. I am pledged to do that. Our President is pledged to do that. I think that that is something that is a universal opinion between Democrats and Republicans in this Congress, that we keep our sacred trust with the seniors in America, that we do not diminish their benefits, their anticipated promised benefits, that we keep that intact, that we don't increase the contribution rate, we keep that intact.

But something that we have done if we had had the support of the Blue Dogs, because the Republicans were in support of this, was the President's proposal that we offer people the opportunity if they were young enough to make the actuarials work out, a personal retirement account that could begin to transition some people off of Social Security. They get their Social Security benefits too, but it would supplement that, and then the need to increase that would have diminished over time.

We couldn't get there, Mr. Speaker. We couldn't reform the huge entitle-

ment of Social Security even to keep it actuarially sound. Some said it is a political third rail the President should never have touched. The President says it is a third rail that you if you don't touch it, it is the third rail, but he couldn't and we couldn't get the job done to reform Social Security even though there was no down side for senior citizens, at least a level guaranteed to them, even though there was only an upside for the younger generations, and one of the reasons is the issue got demagogued across this country dramatically.

The President did at least 30 stops across the country. He articulated what this was about. It would have been good if he would have had spokesmen and women from the younger generation, the under-30-somethings that were half as vocal as the 30-somethings that come out here on the floor that would speak up for their opportunity to be able to ensure their retirement without having to become financially destitute when you get from that point where we start out 16 workers for every one retired at the beginning of Social Security, where we are about three to one now and where we will soon get to two to one under this current program.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look into the future. We need a long-term planning approach to the things we do in this Congress. And this electoral process does anything but. It focuses Members on the idea that you get elected, you come down here and swear into office and while you are doing that, there is someone announcing their candidacy to run against you. They're home in the district 6 or 7 days in a week, stabbing you in the media, raising money and trying to unseat you. You are supposed to concentrate on policy when you have someone trying to unseat your political survival from the day you swore in, and you are up for reelection in 2 years.

So this constitutional system that we have, in fact, it is one that I appreciate and revere. In a lot of ways it makes us very responsive to the public. Our fingers are on their pulse. They let us know; we react quickly. This House can move more quickly than the Senate by far if we decide to do it. That is a good thing.

The bad thing is if I called a meeting and said, we are going to start a new long-term planning caucus here in the United States Congress, and invite all 435 Members, you know, if I ordered a lot of good food and advertised it, some would show up. And then after the next week and the next week and the next week, pretty soon there will only be a small handful of people that would be working on something like that just because the system is set up where it focuses us on the things that are urgent, sometimes at the expense of the policy that is important. That is the down side of this constitutional system that sets us up for reelections every 2 years. But if you give us a lifetime tenure, I'm not sure we would solve the problem either.

And you go over to the Senate side and there every 6 years a third of them up for reelection every election cycle and they don't seem to have a lot more interest in long-term planning than we do over here.

So I look to Wall Street. I look to major corporations. I look to the business communities in America for leadership. I am wondering what are they putting together so that we can have economic viability and a healthy populace that can be raising families and bringing up the next generation so that we can continue this American Dream. I watch what they do, and I get the unalterable message from them that their real focus is on their next quarterly report.

Well, I understand that. You have got to produce profit for your investors, and the board of directors is telling you what they want you to do. But where is the leadership in America for long-term vision? Where is the leadership that will take us down this path where we will eventually get to solve the Social Security problem, to solve the Medicare problem, and I will submit the words of George Will which were, democracies function under the lash of necessity.

And we haven't reached the lash of necessity if we are talking about actuarial tables that start going into zero on the Social Security trust fund in 2016 nor a fund that runs out to zero in 2042. That is not the lash of necessity. We need the American people to be looking ahead and demanding that we put long-term plans in place. And that is important that the media, that the philosophers, that the writers, the people that are opinion leaders in America join with us so we can put the pieces in place for a long-term solution to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid to a lesser degree. All that solves the interest problem, and even then, if we simply had discipline in our spending, we can solve this all with growth, Mr. Speaker.

So if the Blue Dogs want to talk about getting to a balanced budget, I am for that. Let's do so. Let's do it by spending discipline. Let's do it by reforming Medicare. Let's do it by reforming Social Security. By the way, I have a couple of ideas for you on Medicaid. If we can do those things, this budget becomes easy. We need to index our spending then to the factor of inflation which should keep us down below the revenue stream when we have the economic growth that we have if we have good favorable tax policies.

I can go on into subject matter that has to do with reforming the Tax Code that eliminates the IRS and eliminates the entire income tax code. It untaxes all the production in America and puts it on consumption. Mr. Speaker, I would take us all down that path, and I may well run out of time before I can get to that.

But I wanted to address the concerns that were raised by the Blue Dogs. And

I would point out that to compare spending, the spending of the National debt to the amount of money that we spend in this Congress on education, I can look through this Constitution that I have in my pocket, and I can't find anything in there that says, thou shalt extract money from the taxpayers to fund education. It is not comparable to the National debt. It is not relevant to the National debt. To the extent we make the decision that we want to invest in education, it is not something that is a legitimate measure.

Neither is it a legitimate measure on the part of the Members on the other side of the aisle. And I believe that includes the Blue Dogs as well. Neither is it a legitimate measure to argue that because we spend billions of dollars in Iraq, we ought to spend billions of dollars on SCHIP. There is no legitimate measure. They are not linked. They can't be linked. But if you want to link them, if you choose to link SCHIP spending to the global war on terror, to the funding that supports our men and women whose lives are on the line in places like Afghanistan and Iraq and other places around the world, if that is your will, to link that spending, then let me associate this for you.

I point it out this way, Mr. Speaker, that if it is a zero sum game, and by presumption it is a zero sum game if we are going to compare national defense spending to the State Children's Health Insurance Program, then the zero sum game comes down to this: How many bullet-proof vests would you deprive our soldiers and marines of in order to fund health insurance for middle, let me say, upper-income kids? Because we are talking about a Congress that passed subsidy for health insurance premiums for families in my State up over \$103,000; \$103,250, 400 percent of poverty. That was the Pelosi plan. That was, Mr. Speaker, the 400 percent of poverty that passed off the floor of this Congress.

I submit that subsidizing health insurance premiums when people are making over \$103,000 a year is an irresponsible expansion of this budget. It cannot be defended within the context of the previous hour that was delivered by the Blue Dogs. It can't be defended by anyone unless it is their will and their intent to move us to socialized medicine.

What is our line here? I will argue that in the 1990s we passed welfare reform. This welfare reform was called workfare in a lot of cases, to move people off of the multigenerational dependency on welfare, move them into work, transition them smoothly so they could get there and observe and recognize and act upon the reality that when people moved off of welfare when they started to earn more income, they would no longer qualify for Medicaid which was, of course, the health care that is provided for the low-income among us. The working poor weren't going to have health insurance for their children.

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So this Congress passed SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Plan, to subsidize, in most cases, to replace, to buy the health insurance premiums for working-poor kids, the children of the working poor, so they could transition out of welfare and onto work without losing the health coverage for their children. Pretty good idea. When it passed out of this Congress and went to the States, the States had this opportunity to take it up. We took it up in Iowa. We called it HAWK-I. We called it the Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa.

We set that at 200 percent of poverty. I supported that and adapted some of the language technically and voted for 200 percent of poverty level. That 200 percent of poverty level then grew. The State got an exception where one could exempt 20 percent of the income of a family. So you get into a situation where the 200 percent of poverty, that turns out to be about \$41,000 and change a year for a family of four; when you exempt 20 percent of the income, that goes to \$51,625.

That is where we are today. I don't call \$51,625 the working poor in my State. It might be in some States. It's not the working poor in my State. Most people don't make more than that in the State, but most people provide the health insurance for their families and their children. When it's provided through the employer, this bill that was pushed through this Congress provides a perverse incentive to crowd kids off of private health insurance and put them on the government-funded health insurance. That is the crowd-out factor.

The crowd-out factor was a lot bigger for the 400 percent of poverty. I don't recall that number, as I stand here, Mr. Speaker, but as that bill went over to the Senate and it was negotiated down to 300 percent of poverty, the crowd-out factor became 2 million kids in America that today have health insurance that is paid for by their parents or at the workplace of their parents, and those 2 million kids would be crowded off of their own private insurance rolls and put onto the government-funded insurance rolls.

Now they would match up with a number about 3.8 million kids that don't have insurance today. They have health care, but statistically they don't have insurance. That sometimes is a fluid number. There are people in transition between one policy and another. That is added into that 3.8 million. But the 2 million is a hard number. That is the number of kids that get crowded out, pushed off their own private health insurance.

That is unacceptable. If we are trying to insure children of the working poor, we don't take it up to \$103,250 income for a family of four and say we are going to subsidize it up to that point, now we have helped the poor kids, because \$103,000 is not poor. That is really wealthy where I come from. That is 400

percent of poverty. That is not the answer to subsidizing health insurance for the kids of the working poor. That is what SCHIP is supposed to be.

Three hundred percent of poverty is what this House passed the last time after it was negotiated in the Senate. That is \$77,437 in my State. In some States, it's \$83,000. That is not the working poor for a family of four. Probably not for a family of any normal size that we would see today. But that is the standard that this House has passed again. Still, it crowds out 2 million kids. One of my objections, one of my real objections to this is that they have changed the language in this bill. They have changed the language that under current Medicaid qualifier standards there has to be a demonstration of citizenship or a lawful presence in the United States that extends beyond the 5-year prohibition for receiving any welfare benefits here in this country.

That provision has been weakened by an addition to a section in this SCHIP bill, and it has been done so by the majority, and they have done it more than once. When we raised the objection and said that this language has changed and it will provide taxpayer dollar benefits to people who are in this country illegally to give them Medicaid and SCHIP, the majority said, no, that's not true because we have a paragraph in the bill that says none of these funds shall go to fund illegals.

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that they wouldn't have had to add the language to the bill if they weren't going to do something with it. The language that they added to the bill is scored by the Congressional Budget Office, who analyzed the language and has a job in a nonpartisan way of calculating the impact on our budget, and they concluded it would cost an additional, the changes that open the door to allow people who are deportable to collect health insurance benefits and health benefits in the form of Medicaid, illegals in the United States, the cost to that is, according to the Congressional Budget Office, \$3.7 billion in Federal tax dollars, \$2.8 billion in State tax dollars. The easy math on that is \$6.5 billion all together it costs the taxpayers of the United States to fund Medicaid and SCHIP, most of it, a vast, vast majority of it, for illegals, that if we simply ask the immigration customs and enforcement why don't we deliver that benefit in the form of a voucher and you guys take it up there and hand it over, when they met with most of these people they would have to take them into custody and take them home to the country where they belong.

That is the reality of the law. That is the law, Mr. Speaker. \$6.5 billion, and yet I have people here in this Congress and around the country that say: STEVE KING is wrong on this. This bill really doesn't allow for funding to go to illegals. It really doesn't open the door. My answer to that, first of all, is

if you think I am wrong, what is your number? Submit to me your number. Would you like to submit zero? Say that to the Congressional Budget Office.

Right here, Mr. Speaker, is the CBO report that shows the \$3.7 billion, and the easy math that came from the Energy and Commerce Committee to put the States' share in that comes to \$6.5 billion. My question is: If you think I am wrong, what is your number? The second question is: If I am wrong, why is the majority so insistent upon keeping their language in the bill that opens the standards up for Medicaid qualification that just simply says all you have to do is write down a Social Security number and we are going to recommend that the Social Security Administration verify that number, maybe send a letter back to the provider or to the State if that number doesn't match up.

We know how well that works with employment in this country. We have at least 6.9 million working illegals in America. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, those 6.9 million, which may now be 7 or 7.1 million people, at least 55 percent of them have false documentation that they present in order to get the job. That is a Social Security number that has been submitted in the same fashion under the same standard as would be required for Medicaid qualifications. We know how well it is working with hiring illegals in America when you say, give me a Social Security number. It is not working. That is why we are in the middle of this immigration debate, Mr. Speaker.

So, I will submit that that same standard has no chance of working any better if you are going to use it to be able to qualify applicants for Medicaid and SCHIP. It defies logic to think that the Congressional Budget Office hands out a document that says \$3.7 billion Federal, and Energy and Commerce calculates the State share of that and it comes to \$2.8 billion, and you are at \$6.5 billion in cost. Why does it cost \$6.5 billion more money, if there is nothing in this bill that funds illegals? And why is the majority going to fall on their sword to protect the language that opens up the standards, if it doesn't change anything? One can't get past that. Facts are inconvenient truths to some people on the other side of the aisle and sometimes on this side of the aisle.

But what I recognize is I have been joined here by my colleague from New Jersey who occasionally will be watching C-SPAN at night and have a thought and a concept that he needs to get out here this evening. So with that in mind, with great gratitude, I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Well, I thank the gentleman from Iowa for giving me the opportunity to address the House.

First, before I begin, let me just say this. I commend the gentleman for

your being down here on the floor to, first and foremost, refute the arguments that had been made initially, in your opening statements, refuting the arguments made by the other side of the aisle, where I believe you were getting into the issues of the debt and what have you, and some of the other points you made with regard to our spending levels, and finally on SCHIP.

If I may, I want to address a couple of those. First of all, here we are at the end of October, 10 months into the rule under the new Democrat majority, and we have to ask, what has their leadership wrought? They have brought us the largest tax increase in U.S. history, the creation of slush funds, where a lot that money is going to go to, and the end to the transparency that they promised in the last election that they would bring to this House.

On the first point, as far as the largest tax increase in history, that began initially as soon as the Democrats took control with their budget, a \$387 billion tax increase, which basically is too large of a number for any of us to get our hands around. But what it really translates down to is, on average, around a \$2,500 to \$2,700 increase that every individual in this country will have to take out of their pockets, from the hard-earned money they make, and send down here to Washington so Congress can spend it instead on who knows what it may be. That is where they began.

We know just this past week the chairman of Ways and Means has come out with the "mother of all tax increases." That "mother of all tax increases," of course, basically begs the question of what happens to all the orphaned taxpayers then in this country, those who are now left having to foot the bill for that tax increase.

So I raise these points only because it is truly ironic that the other side of the aisle would come to the floor and raise the issue of the debt level and the spending of Congress, because, when you think about it, they ran on a platform that the Republicans were spending too much, but what was the first thing they did when they came here? They decided that they would spend even more. They ran on the platform that we were taxing too much. And what was the first thing they did once they got here? They raised our taxes. And they have done so repeatedly. They have about half a dozen times now had legislation, just about every single major piece of legislation that has come to the floor so far, that has included some form of tax increase in it.

Now, the gentleman from Iowa raises the point now near the end of his discussion with regard to SCHIP, and I always appreciate his explaining to the American public what the acronym SCHIP really does stand for. SCHIP stands for "Socialized Clinton-Style Hillarycare for Illegals and Their Parents." I will get to that point of illegals in a minute, but let's look at

the overall focus and what the intention is here.

I think it begs the question to ask, is anyone from either side of the aisle not intending working towards making sure all Americans can have the health care that they need? I think we all agree on that.

The next question is, do we not want to make sure then that all American citizens' indigent children get the health care that they need? I think, generally speaking, except for the partisanship and the politicking on the other side of the aisle, I would have to say that all of us agree on that as well.

Then we have to ask ourselves, what is the best mechanism to get there? Is SCHIP and the expansion that the Democrats want to foist on the American public the best way to get there? I would answer that question by saying, no, it is not.

Going in reverse order, the gentleman from Iowa raises the point with regard to illegals, an important point. The Democrats will tell you, don't worry about it. The bill already says in plain language that illegals are not allowed to get these benefits, as if all you need to do is put those words into a bill and that makes it so.

I see on the table over there, I think that looks like your demonstration for the wall. Is that what that is?

Mr. KING of Iowa. Yes.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. You know, we would not need that wall under the Democrat philosophy, because we already have a law that says no illegals may come into this country illegally. If that is all it takes is just to say they can't do it and it won't happen, you don't need that wall. You don't need any surveillance. We don't need any border security guards, because we have a law that says they are not allowed to come into this country illegally. But we know that that is not the way it works. What works is you need enforcement. You suggest enforcement in the form of a wall, and I agree with you on that.

In the area of SCHIP, enforcement means that we need to have a way of verification for an individual when they come to claim American taxpayers' dollars for their own benefit for them to verify that they are legal American citizens entitled to it. And that is all that the Republicans were asking for, some sort of process to make sure that was done.

Now, the Democrats also argue, look, they put in a penalty provision for the States. The Democrats were not willing to actually put an enforcement mechanism in themselves to say how they want to verify the illegals. But the Democrats will say, well, we are going to leave that little question to the States instead and have the States cleverly come up with it. Of course, you and I are all supportive of States being the laboratory of experimentation.

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The Democrats then say that is all we need to do. I would suggest that is

not all you need to do. The enforcement there is not to say to the States if you mess this up, if you don't enforce the law and allow illegals to get American taxpayer dollars under this program, and therefore potentially deprive other American children of their benefits, it does not say that those States will not receive any Medicaid benefits whatsoever. It does not say that they will not receive SCHIP benefits as well. It just holds the additional funding that goes to those States.

Under the original DRA law that was signed in 2005 and went into effect in July of 2006, for those States under Medicaid where it applied to, we saw a decrease because of the Republican enforcement mechanisms of illegals actually getting those benefits. What the Republicans have simply asked the Democrat majority to allow us to do is to allow those systems that are working to apply to the entire SCHIP process.

So on the point of trying to make sure that only U.S. American citizens get the benefits, Republicans have a plan and it has been working in other aspects of Medicaid, and we wish to expand it.

I yield back.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman for coming to the floor and giving us a New Jersey perspective on this issue of SCHIP and also the overall budget that we have.

As the gentleman arrived, I was reaching for a quote in my memory and I came up a little bit empty. And so I looked it up while I was listening to the gentleman from New Jersey.

You have heard a number of facts that have been rolled out by the gentleman from New Jersey. You have heard a number of facts that I have rolled out here. I have said they are stubborn things. But it was John Adams who spoke to facts in memorable fashion when he said: "Facts are stubborn things. And whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." John Adams, and that was before the Declaration of Independence that he made that statement, as I recall.

And so as we laid these facts out here, this SCHIP initiative that we have today, current law, family of four qualifies in my State up to \$51,625. It may be higher than that in New Jersey.

But the bill vetoed by the President and the bill that was passed out of this House last week is a bill that funds up to 300 percent of poverty, family of four, \$77,437. That is off of Governor Culver's Web page. By doing the simple calculation that is provided there on whether you qualify or whether you don't, the \$51,625, and 300 percent of poverty is pretty simple, you just do the math on that.

This House passed it at 400 percent of poverty. That was the Pelosi plan. The argument is this is not the cornerstone to socialized medicine.

Mr. Speaker, I submit when you cover 95 percent of the kids in America

with SCHIP, which you would do once you get up over that 400 percent of poverty, only 5 percent are left on their own insurance. The rest are crowded out. The 2 million who would be crowded off their own insurance plan under this plan which has been vetoed by the President and then brought back in substantive identity to the first bill by the Pelosi-led Congress, that legislation still crowds out a huge percentage of the kids.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. I will make this last point if the gentleman permits. The definition of a middle-class benefit or entitlement is one that goes to the middle class of America.

The definition, I guess, of a program for the indigent would be a program that is aimed for those who are making less than the average, less than middle-class America.

I wanted to give a couple of numbers. The median, middle, middle income in this country is around \$46,000 for a family of four essentially. That is the middle. That would be how we define middle class across the board. Some higher, some lower. That is the middle.

The bill, SCHIP, as it was created initially was for 200 percent of poverty. That would be around \$42,000 for a family of four, so less than the middle.

There are some discussions going on literally as we speak right now in what the Senate is looking at to bring this program up to around 275 percent of poverty. That would be \$58,000 for a family of four. So if middle, middle-class America is around \$46,000, and some are suggesting we should be bringing the coverage up to \$58,000, by definition it is a middle-class entitlement. Actually above middle class. Slightly above middle-class entitlement, as a matter of fact. It begs the question if you are trying to set up a program to address the problems of the indigent Americans in this country, why are you bringing the number up so high we are going over the median income in this country.

That is a rhetorical question. I don't think the other side can answer it unless they simply want to be honest with us and tell us they are trying to do what Bill Clinton said back when he was President that he wants universal coverage where the government has socialized medicine, and you will start with indigent children, you will go to all children and eventually you will go to all adults in the entire country. One-fifth of this economy will be encompassed by a government-run health care system, something you and I definitely oppose.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Again I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. I would ask him to point out to the body the acronym of SCHIP that he illustrated in his speech. I know that poster is available, and so I would direct the attention of body to the gentleman from New Jersey and the poster.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. SCHIP. It has another meaning as Republicans initially created it, but we see what the Democrats have morphed it into. SCHIP now stands for Socialized Clinton-style Hillarycare for Illegals and their Parents. That wraps it all right up there. They are willing to go back to what Hillary and Bill Clinton wanted to do, and that was to have a universal, socialized plan that the government would control, literally one-fifth of the economy, health care economy, the same government that gave us FEMA and the way they handled Hurricane Katrina and the same aftermath of Katrina, the same government that gives so many other problems of waste, fraud and abuse, and the same government that gave us the proverbial bridge to nowhere. That Clinton-style type of government, Hillarycare for illegals. As the gentleman from Iowa just pointed out, it is not for American citizens. It is for anyone who simply wants to walk across the border and take the benefits of the hardworking American taxpayers.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I very much thank the gentleman from New Jersey.

I want to point out that this acronym has been out here now for over a week. When it says SCHIP stands for Socialized Clinton-Style Hillarycare for Illegals and their Parents, the criticism that has come for that is that no one has argued with the substance. They simply say, well, this is emotional. It is reactionary. Well, tell me what's wrong? Does this not lay the cornerstone to socialized medicine, to provide for taxpayer-funded insurance for kids and families up over \$100,000 for the 400 percent that was brought across this floor in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, does that not lay the cornerstone for socialized medicine? I submit, yes, it does.

And what happens in this county when, under current SCHIP, we have adults on up to age 25, 85 percent of those receiving SCHIP funding in Minnesota are adults. Some argue 92 percent. It is 66 percent in Wisconsin. I mean, these are huge numbers. This isn't for kids the way the system is today. But it is to lay the cornerstone to socialized medicine. I will support that statement.

As John Adams says, facts are stubborn things. Here is a fact about laying the cornerstone for socialized medicine. This is what President Bill Clinton said about achieving socialized health care on September 29, 2000: "You know, when Hillary and HHS Secretary Donna Shalala and I started working on this back in 1993, we proposed a solution that would have covered all Americans. And it was too much for the system to accommodate at once, so we've gone back, piece, by piece, trying to achieve that. We have now the Children's Health Insurance. Next, we need to deal with the 55 to 65-year-old age group."

Does anybody think that this isn't part of a plan to lay the cornerstone

for socialized medicine when the very words came out of the mouth of Bill Clinton on September 29, 2000? He was still President then.

And a speech he gave here on the floor of Congress on September 22, 1993, where he laid out component after component of the plan to get to Hillarycare. And by the way, it was Hillarycare. It was Hillary working behind the scenes in some secret meetings to put together an overall health care proposal which was socialized medicine.

Mr. Speaker, it was wrong then. It is wrong now. This is the cornerstone of socialized medicine. It is a component of Hillarycare.

Bill Clinton again, September 29, 2000: "You know, when Hillary and Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala started working on this back in 1993, we proposed a solution that would have covered all Americans."

Well, a solution that covers all Americans, I would submit, isn't your private health care program, isn't the one that has been built by the free enterprise system, the one that has provided the incentive to do the research and development that has given us the best health care in the world. A system that would have covered all Americans is socialized medicine. That is a definitional fact. This is a direct quote from President Bill Clinton, September 29, 2000.

I say SCHIP stands for Socialized Clinton-style Hillarycare for Illegals and their Parents. It is a matter of historical fact. She met over and over again, and some would say the meetings could have been more lawful. That is not my issue so much as she was driving a health care policy as First Lady as if she were the lead health care policy wonk in America. It collapsed when the American people revolted against it because it was Hillarycare, because it was socialized medicine.

It came to us Clinton-style, but he delivered it here on the floor of the House of Representatives on September 22, 1993. In the year 2000, when he found out they couldn't drive it through, he said, well, we are going to give you a solution that will cover all Americans, but we are going to give it to you a piece at a time.

So when SCHIP passes at 200 percent of poverty, then we will raise it to 400 percent of poverty. This is what the Pelosi Congress wanted to do. These are all facts, these inconvenient, stubborn things. At 400 percent of poverty, you have only about 5 percent of the kids any longer on private health insurance. So the culture to provide for your children's health insurance premium is gone. It is wiped out. It is destroyed by a Congress bent on laying the cornerstone to socialized medicine, SCHIP. Socialized Clinton-style Hillarycare. Those issues are all addressed for what, Mr. Speaker, for illegals and their parents.

I have spoken to this. Here is the CBO score: \$6.5 billion increased costs

in fundings that are not currently going to illegal recipients of Medicaid, and those funding that currently are going to SCHIP to illegal recipients, that comes from the changes that are in this bill that passed this House last week and the bill the President vetoed, the bill that this Congress refused to override. That \$6.5 billion.

They can argue that they changed the language. They did. They were distinctions without a difference, and the proof that it lacks a difference is because the Congressional Budget Office scored, evaluated the cost to taxpayers, at precisely the same dollar amount. Regardless of whether it was the language they first brought or the language that they amended it to, the distinction is without a difference. It still provides for health care for illegals in America.

Mr. Speaker, fact after fact come out here. These inconvenient truths, to quote a famous author in America. I will go down through some that I have missed.

It does weaken citizenship requirements. The loss in taxpayer dollars, the net loss to my State is \$226 million. Everybody that has a State where people smoke will pay 61 cents more a pack. When they do that, they will pay more taxes.

It is also a fact that one of the most regressive taxes we have is the tax on tobacco because people less well-to-do tend to smoke more. It is an inverse relationship when they do a little better. We could look into the reasons for that, but we know this. Poor people pay a greater percentage of their income on the current tobacco tax, and will pay a far greater percentage of their income on the proposed tobacco tax. The idea on the part of the Speaker's side of the aisle is you would raise the tobacco tax and, therefore, there would be an incentive for people to smoke less.

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I agree there would be, and I'd like to see what those numbers produce and maybe that's a good thing, and I'd like to evaluate that tax policy on that.

But we've got another little problem here, and that is, that in order to fund this increase, we have to have 22.4 million new smokers in America. So we've got to go out there and unleash Joe Camel again and get him out there recruiting the kids in America to start smoking, because if we don't do that, we can't fund their health insurance, and even if we do do that, we're still going to have, according to the first bill they passed at 400 percent of poverty, 70,000 families in America that qualify for SCHIP and still qualify to pay the alternative minimum tax, that tax on the rich.

So I'll submit, Mr. Speaker, that this is a bit of a bizarre proposal, and it's awfully hard to explain the rationale behind it when there are so many conflicting inconsistencies. But in the end, it's a net increase in cost to my State

of \$226 million. It will take an increase of 22.4 million new smokers to fund it. It will fund, at 300 percent of poverty, families of four in my State earning \$77,473. It will crowd 2 million kids off of the private family and business, job-funded insurance rolls, cost \$6.5 billion to fund the illegals that are participating in programs that today are barred from so and add taxes to cigarettes of 61 cents a pack.

Now, you add that all up, those are the facts. Those are the stubborn things. Those are the inconvenient truths that the other side of the aisle has to deal with. I simply called it SCHIP, "Socialized Clinton-style Hillarycare for Illegals and Their Parents."

So, Mr. Speaker, in the remaining time, I think that I should do a bit of a demonstration for the sake of popular demand. I wanted to point out for the body that we're spending \$8 billion on our southern border, and this is supposed to keep us from the \$6.5 billion in costs that are accumulated here under this SCHIP bill that came out of the Pelosi Congress.

But on that border that's 2,000 miles long, \$8 billion, that's \$4 million a mile. So I thought, you know, I've got a mile of gravel road that runs west of my house, and if Michael Chertoff came to me and he said I'm going to give you \$4 million but it's your job to make sure that only 75 percent of the people that want to cross that road get across and 25 percent of them stay where they are, that's our current efficiency rate that we're getting out of our \$8 billion and \$4 million a mile on our southern border today. We interdict about 25 percent of those trying, and about 75 percent get across. You might argue it's one out of three, but they'll testify one out of three, one out of four. We stopped 1,188,000 going across that border in the last year that was reported to me. That means about 4 million try. That's about 11,000 a night, 11,000 a night. Twice the size of Santa Anna's army pouring across our southern border, not in the day, at night. Every single night, Mr. Speaker.

What would I do if Michael Chertoff said, I'm going to offer you a contract. I'd bid it. It wouldn't be a no-bid contract. I'd want to compete for this, \$4 million for my mile of road. What would I do?

Well, I'd get out there and build something because I know the Humvees cost a lot of money, and uniforms and retirement programs and health plans for our Federal employees cost a lot of money. Now, I love our border patrol. They're doing a great job, and I've been down there to work with them, but I would submit they could use some help. I would give them a little structure. I'd go in there and say, Your job would be a lot easier if we build you a physical barrier. I'd want it double. I'd put the fence in, and I'd build the wall. The wall would be something that would last a long, long time.

This would be the trenched footing that I would put in. It would be slip form, Mr. Speaker, and I would set this trench footing into the ground. I'd drag her along, and I'd pour slip form right behind it. It would look like this from the end. Then I'm going to set it up in this stand, and I'll show you how easy it is to build a wall. It will take about, let me say, \$1.2 million, about \$1.2 million a mile, and you just simply put this in about like that. That would be a piece of concrete that would be about 13 feet high, 13-and-a-half feet high, about half that for width, and then you pick up your little crane and drop this thing in here. That's about 12,000 pounds per formation.

Mr. Speaker, I thought I heard your gavel as I dropped that in the hole. I apologize for that. I was making a little too much noise.

I would wrap this up simply by then submitting that I believe I have demonstrated how we can protect America at about \$1.2 million a mile as opposed to \$4 million a mile. I'd encourage this Congress take a good look.

SAFETY RECALLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker for the recognition.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to talk about a growing, a disturbing trend of food and consumer product recalls in this country, safety recalls. Mr. Speaker, the danger is real. That danger has been widely documented. It's been widely discussed in the media, in committee hearings, the Lou Dobbs show and around the watercooler at work.

Mr. Speaker, parents are afraid. They're afraid that their children are playing with lead-tainted toy sets. Parents are afraid that the magnets in toys or charms may cause internal damage if a child accidentally swallows them. Families are afraid that the food they eat or the food they feed their pets may actually be contaminated with plastic that can cause harm or death to their beloved pet. People are afraid their toothpaste may contain antifreeze. People are afraid that the fish they serve to their families may contain dangerous antibiotics.

Now, I could elaborate about additional concerns, but generally, people are afraid about the source of these products and the dangers attendant to them and rightfully so. Mr. Speaker, people are afraid about defective products being imported into our country, and honestly, it seems like most of these concerns focus around a single country, the People's Republic of China.

Consumers' health and well-being are being endangered on two fronts: the food we eat, the goods we use. Let's use some time tonight, let's spend some

time tonight discussing both fronts and what we in Congress can do and should be doing to protect American families from harmful products.

In the arena of food safety, you might ask the question, has anyone in Congress been paying attention to the safety of the food we eat? Well, I feel the answer to that question is yes. We've spent some time in the committee on which I sit, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and we are pursuing an aggressive investigation and an aggressive legislative agenda to confront the problem.

Now, as a member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, we have taken an active role in investigating the safety of our Nation's own food supply. In August, a bipartisan team of investigators was sent to China to see firsthand if they could elucidate the cause of the problem. Now, the committee staff report, the investigators came to the following conclusions from their trip and from their investigation thus far.

Quoting directly from the staff report now, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the Chinese food supply chain does not meet international safety standards. It is, in fact, responsible for very serious domestic Chinese food poisoning outbreaks.

Number 2, the Chinese Government appears to be determined to avoid embarrassing food safety outbreaks in export markets due to the damaging and potentially lasting effect that this would have on their "Made in China" brand.

And thirdly, the lack of meaningful internal regulation of farming and food processing in China, the advanced development of the document counterfeiting industry, and the willingness of some people to simply break the law, the willingness of some entrepreneurs in both China and the United States to smuggle foodstuffs that do not meet quality standards, necessitates a much more vigorous program of inspection and laboratory testing in China and at U.S. points of entry than the Food and Drug Administration has been able or willing to pursue.

Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker, because it's so important. This necessitates a much more vigorous program of inspection and laboratory testing in China and at U.S. ports of entry than the Food and Drug Administration has been able or willing to pursue to date.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these are important conclusions, and we must not simply watch the problem worsen. We must be willing to confront the problem head-on and transform the Food and Drug Administration into an agency that can fully cope with the importation problems of a 21st century world.

The Energy and Commerce Committee is doing their part to do just that. In addition to the staff trip to China, they're in the middle of a series of five hearings to discuss the topic: Can the Food and Drug Administration